



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Attack on America: September 11, 2001 and the U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. COAST GUARD ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
Operation Noble Eagle Documentation Project

Interviewees: Rear Admiral Roy J. Casto, USCG

Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District

with

Captain Joel Whitehead, USCG

Chief of Staff, Eighth District

&

Captain Richard Sullivan, USCGR

Chief of Homeland Security, Eighth Coast Guard District

Interviewer: PAC Peter Capelotti, USCGR

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Q: We're in the process of that this morning Sir because we're trying to grab a little part of the elephant that was this sort of universal surge that went on after 9/11. So ideally I would have been doing this interview with you, or someone would have been doing this interview with you, six months ago to find out what was being stood up in the District.

But I wanted to just start by asking you what some of the sort of generic issues you were dealing with as District Commander before 9/11. You have a lot of strategic ports in this District. I assume that port security, even though it has raised its head all around the Coast Guard now, was not very far off your radar screen even on 9/10?

RADM Casto: Yes, with a little different focus I would say. First let me say we were going to have two other important people here because you're going to get the District's perspective. I was going to try to have our Captain of the Port and our Group Commander here - both of them are out of town - so you can get their perspective as well, which might be a little different. I hope it's not too different, but it might be a

little different. The big issues on our plates: we're still trying to swallow and digest the merging of what was the 2nd District and the 8th District.

Q: So that's still ongoing; that whole process?

CAPT Whitehead: The suffering's ongoing.

RADM Casto: The suffering is ongoing. We went from 400 . . .

CAPT Whitehead: I think it was 366 combined to 160 about.

CAPT Sullivan: Something like that.

RADM Casto: It's a 40-percent reduction in the number of people to do the same job. And so most of the staff has been trying to get to places like Keokuk, Iowa, New Orleans, Paducah, Kentucky, and Paris Landing, Tennessee, and outreach with the people on the rivers who think that we've abandoned them entirely.

Q: Have we?

RADM Casto: I would say that this District is doing as good a job as we can. I promised those people on the rivers that I would personally be their champion and I've tried to hold true to that. But I can tell, you trying to get the attention of inland river issues that are valid issues on the part of the Area and Headquarters is very difficult; it's very difficult. The only place I really have any luck is with [Rear] Admiral [Paul J.] Pluta who was in this job before me, who understands. But there's not a lot of respect frankly for what goes on in the rivers and it's not a glamorous thing, so there's not a lot of interest in it. But it's real. I mean, what, 16-percent . . . out of every bit of commerce in this country 16-percent of it comes down those rivers, and if you shut one of them down for more than a few hours you can bet the phones are ringing here.

Q: You said that port security was on your screen but in a different way. Could you elaborate on that?

RADM Casto: Well we've got – as we've found post September 9/11 - we already knew we had a lot of dangerous cargo going up and down the rivers and in the ports. We have, I think, six out of the largest ten ports in the country here and we were concerned, as we're concerned today, with incidents/accidents that could happen without a terrorist's trigger, and things like groundings, fires and oil spills.

Q: Yes, Sir.

RADM Casto: We're in the midst of another major oil spill clean up right now. That's not unusual in this District. So we had those kinds of things that threaten the port, that happen as a result of accidents, not as a result of terrorism.

Q: Do you remember where you were that morning?

RADM Casto: I won't forget. I was on leave. I got here in April, spent most of the summer traveling around, and on September 7th or 8th or something like that I took off on a week of leave, and that's where I was when the planes flew into the Towers.

Q: You and [the Commander of Coast Guard Activities New York / Captain of the Port Rear] Admiral [Richard E.] Bennis, I think he had just gone on leave as well.

RADM Casto: Yeah, and then I was stuck there. I couldn't get back. I was on a beach in Florida and I remember my wife yelling, a plane hit the Towers in New York. And I ran in and I go, what, is this crazy or something, and then it came home that it was real. But the guy who was on-scene was Captain [Joel] Whitehead, because he was running the District in my absence, and we burned up the phone lines pretty good.

Q: Did you come here at the same time as well, Sir?

CAPT Whitehead: Just about. I got here on May 30th, about three weeks after Admiral Casto.

Q: Where were you before this?

CAPT Whitehead: I was Captain of the Port in Boston.

Q: Oh, okay. I was just with [the Commander of the First Coast Guard District Rear] Admiral [George N.] Nacarra last week.

RADM Casto: So I was in Florida and we talked about getting me back. Of course all the planes were shut down and we considered having a Coast Guard plane come over and get me. I don't even know if we'd get clearance for that. But I was very comfortable with Captain Whitehead running things until I could get back, and I got back on Saturday when I think the planes started flying on Friday afternoon out of Florida.

Q: And what were you dealing with in the interim? I mean all this stuff came down on your head pretty quickly.

CAPT Whitehead: Yeah, a little bit of irony: the morning of the incident I was kicking off a Joint Coast Guard-Maritime Administration Conference in the Hales Boggs Federal building [location of D8 HQ] here on Maritime Anti-terrorism and the conference started at eight o'clock our time.

Q: And who was at that, representatives of the shipping communities and all that?

CAPT Whitehead: No, it was mostly law enforcement; local, state, Federal law enforcement agencies.

Q: Okay.

CAPT Whitehead: And it was basically to teach them a little bit about the maritime side and the concerns that Maritime Administration and the Coast Guard have on the potential for terrorism in the maritime world.

Q: So this was something obviously you established, preparing for this?

CAPT Whitehead: Oh we had it set up well in advance. It had been planned for two months in advance, yeah.

Q: Something that was clearly on your radar screen well before 9/11.

CAPT Whitehead: Yeah, and that morning at about ten of eight o'clock I guess it was, our time, my wife called and said, turn on the TV. She's usually my first alert. She says, turn on the TV. She said, a plane hit the World Trade Center. And I turned it on and I was looking at that thinking, oh my goodness, and I was wondering, is this terrorism or is this just an accident? And then I left to go down to the session and while I was there somebody came in from the Command Center and whispered to me and said another

one just hit the other Trade Center, and I said, well this is no accident. Then I gave my intro and mentioned, maybe what's happening now . . . this seems like it's not an accident at all.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: So this is not the maritime world, but of course it's terrorism. And I pretty much gave my introductory remarks and got out of there because we wanted to get things going. We immediately got our team of people; Chief of Operations, Chief of Marine Safety and everybody together and talked about it. And at eleven o'clock that morning we stood up our IMT; our Incident Management Team.

Q: Let me ask you, I was interviewing the Captain of the Port in New York last week and he said after the Towers were hit they sort of reflectively said, we've got to put up a security patrol within, I don't know, five minutes or something after the second plane went in, around the Statue of Liberty. And I said, well here you've got this building with 50,000 people in it. Why are you bothering about a statue? And I said, well of course this is one of the symbolic things they would go after if this is the kind of thing they're doing, because very soon thereafter they went after the Pentagon. And who knows where the fourth plane was going. Did you have - that morning, in your mind - a similar set of areas in this District? I mean this District is so massive. Where do you start first?

CAPT Whitehead: Well that was the problem. That's the real problem in this District to begin with is, you know, anywhere in the Coast Guard you can say the resources are extremely limited. In this District the concern I think that we had immediately was we didn't know how this was going to go around the country; whether it was going to expand or whether it was going to be from a maritime threat, but that was our piece to protect. So what we wanted to do right away was to kind of seal off the ports and begin to take a close look at what was coming in and out of the ports. So we essentially took what vessels we had and kind of put them as picket boats outside the main ports. Some of the things we wanted to protect, that immediately came to mind, were the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, which is 26 miles off the coast. We requested from the Area a medium endurance cutter [WMEC]. We've not been able to talk the Area into having a regular presence of MECs in the gulf. They've all gone over towards the 7th District in the Caribbean and for drug related issues. But we made a request right away for that and we also made a request, almost immediately, for what now would be called an MSST [Maritime Safety and Security Team] I guess. But basically a Port Security Unit [PSU] is what we asked for that could go to the Houston/Galveston/Port Arthur area, because that is a major chemical petroleum complex, as well as the New Orleans to Baton Rouge corridor.

Q: None of the Reserve Port Security Units are based in . . . ?

CAPT Whitehead: Well one is.

Q: One is?

CAPT Whitehead: One is based out of Mississippi.

Q: Okay.

CAPT Whitehead: And we assumed and asked for that one.

Q: And did you get that one?

CAPT Whitehead: No, we didn't. The Area didn't give us that one. I think at that point they didn't really understand.

RADM Casto: The only PSUs I know of are, what, up in Boston and New York?

CAPT Whitehead: Right.

Q: And LA/Long Beach and Seattle.

CAPT Whitehead: I think 308, which is PSU 308 here, I think they were scheduled at that time to be going overseas and they were enroute for training to North Carolina with the Marine Corps, or they were getting close to going.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: And I think the Commandant didn't want to pull them out of that obligation he had made to DoD, and I can understand that really.

RADM Casto: And they've gone, huh?

CAPT Whitehead: Yes.

Q: What kinds of things were coming up to you from your Captains of the Port, your MSOs [Marine Safety Offices] and your Groups?

CAPT Whitehead: Well they were, as you can imagine, I mean they were, as always, Coast Guard commanding officers take charge of their local areas.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: I'll bet you every single one of them initiated something immediately with their Port Authorities, their people in the Maritime world, and other agencies, and started doing something. I know Houston immediately sent out a notice to all the Maritime people. New Orleans did so very soon afterwards and began getting all those people together. And of course there were a million questions they were getting, you know, what are you going to do? What kind of extra security procedures?

Q: Sure.

CAPT Whitehead: Gee, I want Coast Guard presence guarding my facility, which was an impossible task, and the Captain of the Ports and the Group commanders who were the resource providers were just faced with an absolute demand for resources that was 100,000 times beyond what we had.

Q: What did you find when you got back here Admiral?

RADM Casto: Well first I found that I was pretty comfortable with what Captain Whitehead had done, but obviously we just had a wake up call. The concern was when and where were future attacks going to come. I think there was clearly a sense that there was more to come in the near term. These people improvised explosive devices; airplanes. We have a lot of things that are either based here or come in and out of here that would make much bigger improvised explosive devices, and so we had a lot of concerns. So it's like, when's the next attack coming? We started reading the Intel board every day - and there was a lot of information on the Intel board - and looking to see what could give us some idea of where we should put our limited resources to protect.

Q: Are you comfortable, or were you then, or have you become comfortable, that we're able to define who the enemy is?

RADM Casto: I'm not quite sure who the enemy is. Probably the best information we have is what comes off the television.

Q: Yes. Does that bother you, as someone who has to command all the waterways of an entire District, that the enemy definition is so vague?

RADM Casto: I don't know. I think not really. What we've tried to do is to triage the most high-risk things that we have to protect no matter who the threat is going to come from. We have a hard time defining threat/risks, but I think we've done a very good job of defining vulnerabilities.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: The problem is, is once you get all the vulnerabilities laid out, there's no way that you can shield all those vulnerable places and vehicles.

Q: Did you trip down a way of . . . you had to assess what you had, what was vulnerable and so forth, and prioritize it, and I guess you had to trip down a secondary set of procedures of what do you do, what you pass off and what you coordinate?

RADM Casto: Yeah, I think as [the Commandant,] Admiral [James] Loy said, we're a response organization. So in the wake of September 11th we responded and we started responding to a lot of the things that Captain Whitehead was mentioning: "Hey Coast Guard, this is your job. Come protect my petro chemical plant 7/24 from the river. Hey Coast Guard, come protect my MARAD [U. S. Maritime Administration] pre-positioned vessels down here on the river 7/24. Hey Coast Guard, come protect the Navy barge that takes people who live on the west bank of the river on the Navy complex across the river to go to work." And we did that at the outset, and then we had to get ourselves out of those things because it was clear we couldn't do those kinds of things. The MARAD ships, we told MARAD we couldn't do it and that they were going to have to go out and hire their own guards to do that, and they were pretty receptive to doing that. But as MARAD found, one person was flipping pancakes at IHOP [International House of Pancakes] yesterday, and then today she's a security guard on their ships. So they're very uncomfortable with that. They would rather have Coast Guard people, but we just couldn't do that. So we starting doing those things and then we said, geez, this isn't the right mix, or the right priorities.

One of the things, I guess jumping ahead; another issue, and I'll just touch on it briefly is, is one of the things I think that has worked out just beyond my expectations in a positive way is the activation of the Reserves. I don't think there's a way that the Reserves could have done what they have done ten years ago. We just weren't that married together. But they came onboard.

The Chief of Staff just mentioned standing up the IMT. The IMT ran for, what, a week or ten days before we started having very significant concerns about issues being dropped between watches; there was no continuity. So we stood up a Homeland Security Staff working directly for the Chief of Staff and we staffed it with active duty and Reserve people, including a Reserve captain.

CAPT Whitehead: We brought Captain Sullivan on first off to begin with. He was our first Chief.

RADM Casto: And when did you arrive R.G.?

CAPT Sullivan: That Friday after the 11th.

CAPT Whitehead: That was when we began the Reserve mobilization; the Friday right afterwards.

Q: Was it a conscious decision to place this with the Chief of Staff; to umbrella "O" and "M"?

RADM Casto: Yes it was, very much so

Q: Could you speak to that, again from the point of view of the 8th District; the “M” side of the house and the “O” side of the house?

RADM Casto: Well we stood up an IMT and they had their own space, they had their own watch, and we were putting a lot of hours into it. And they were doing, I think individually they were doing a fine job. What I found over, I guess the course of the week starting on Saturday after the incident when I got back, was there were issues that had to be worked in the long term and they weren't being worked with any continuity. It would pass from one officer of the watch to the next officer of the watch to the next officer of the watch, and then the other guy would come on, maybe three or four removed. And I would ask questions and sometimes I'd get kind of like blank stares that, well, we didn't know anything about that. And so I felt we had to have somebody who was going to shepherd those issues; one person I could call in and say, what about this, and they'd know about it and be able to speak to it and take action on it.

Q: Do you see that as a permanent part of life for the District now?

RADM Casto: I would love for it to be a permanent part of life for the District now, but what's happening is we're being told that we have to do away with the Reserves by the 30th of September and there's no way that we can sustain that without the Reserve augmentation, and that's an issue that we're engaging with the Area right now.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: It wasn't entirely staffed with Reserves. I forgot how many people we had in there but the mix was close to 50/50, at least when we started out. And I felt much better after we stood up the Homeland Security Staff.

Q: Is this something that would have been . . . you were working these terrorism issues before 9/11, but was there any thought to do something like this before 9/11?

CAPT Whitehead: I think in the world of all the resources you wanted, we would have loved to have had something like that but there wasn't the impetus to do it.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: We still need it. We still need it now.

CAPT Whitehead: We absolutely need it.

Q: Well could you speak to that in the sense of . . . the “M” side of the Coast Guard; Captains of the Port and the Marine Safety Officers and so forth, have they had to reorient their thinking in the sense of looking at their ports as potential battle spaces?

RADM Casto: Well I guess when we start doing things called intelligence preparation of the battlefield I guess the answer on that would be yes. I mean that's what the threat assessments, I guess, that are going on in the ports now are called.

Q: Is that a cultural shift for the “M” side of the Coast Guard?

RADM Casto: I don't know. Maybe Joel [Captain Joel Whitehead], you can answer that more coming out of the “M” side of the Coast Guard.

CAPT Whitehead: Well I think there's been a concern in the Marine Safety field for a while about anti-terrorism. I remember back in 1986, Captain [Steve] Rochon, who's the Captain of the Port here; [now-Rear] Admiral (Select) Rochon, and I were both in the, what was then the Port Safety and Security Division at Headquarters, and that was both of our first tours in Headquarters, and then there was a real focus on Port Security and terrorism because that was right in the wake of the *Achille Lauro* hijacking where Leon Klinghoffer was murdered. And we stood up a branch in that division just to be tracking terrorist groups and all the rest of that. That all went by the wayside in the last 15 years. That whole focus disappeared. Now there maybe somebody up in "O" and intelligence that are doing something like that, but I mean there was a real clear focus on maritime terrorism.

Q: And was that a direct result of *Achille Lauro*, that that was stood up?

CAPT Whitehead: Yes, that was all as a result of *Achille Lauro*, and by, I think, by '93 or '94 that was all gone. We had dismantled it. It wasn't a priority anymore. Port Security cards were a big focus. All of that was gone by the middle Nineties.

Q: Is that something that you see as a permanent part of life now?

CAPT Whitehead: Absolutely. I think with these new bills in Congress; the Senate bill and the House bill, those are all key parts of what's going to be done in the future. But I have to say too, that while there's been a focus on the . . . I think there was probably more of a focus on the Marine Safety side of the house than the operations side. I've been at a Group as well as at an MSO and I think that's one of the things that maybe helped a little bit here is that the staff here knows that I've been in both, and they kind of know that I don't really side with the "M" side or side with the "O" side - that we're a team - and sometimes you're going to have to give here and somebody's going to have give there. We've got a mission to perform and that's the goal is the mission.

Q: Well it's just the idea of phrasing these as sides, is unusual to somebody outside the Coast Guard.

CAPT Whitehead: Well not in other services maybe though.

Q: Yeah.

CAPT Whitehead: I mean you've got an aviation community. You've got a ship driving community. You know, that sort of thing.

Q: Sure.

CAPT Whitehead: As much as we try to . . . and I think this real cultural change that we've gone through maybe is the impetus within the Coast Guard to start looking at combining the "M" and "O" side more closely together, at least on the shore side operations.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: And I personally think that's necessary.

Q: How would you envision the melding of operations and things on the shore side like that? Would you co-locate the Groups and the MSOs for example?

CAPT Whitehead: Yeah, I tried to do this two years ago in Boston. We had a rare opportunity, because the Group Commander and I both agreed that we needed to combine the units into one place. But in that situation you were physically co-located and you could set up one Command Center.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: In this District it's tough here. Boy, this District is tough because the Captain of the Port zones and the Group commanders; their areas of responsibilities are not the same. Up in the 1st District they're almost like a cookie cutter. They overlap each other perfectly, and that's really very, very beneficial, both in terms of regular operations and the potential to combine units. But that's something that would require the Commandant to have to make a conscious decision that he wanted to do it and recognize that it's going to take ten to fifteen years, because you can't change culture quickly. It's not something that's going to change very, very quickly.

Q: That's a fascinating point because it's the exact thing that we're dealing with in the history program. I mean General Armstrong told the Captain the same thing. He said, you could do this tomorrow but it's going to be 15 years before you see the results of it.

CAPT Whitehead: Organizational culture is the hardest, I think the hardest, and the most long term thing to try and change in an organization.

Q: Do the Captains of the Port in this District now . . . well let me backtrack. Before 9/11 was there any movement toward generating a prioritized list of strategic assets within a Captain of the Port's area of responsibility?

CAPT Whitehead: Well we had the old, what, 7100 plan? Is that what that was?

CAPT Sullivan: Ninety Seven Hundred.

CAPT Whitehead: Ninety Seven Hundred plans. We had the old 9700 plans, which I think we dusted ours off within the first week to take a look and to try and say, okay, already do we have an accurate list of what's out there that needs to be protected? And it was fairly dated, you know. It was pretty well dated.

Q: So these PVAs [Port Vulnerability Assessments] that are being done now are sprung right from 9/11; all the Port Vulnerability Assessments?

CAPT Whitehead: Yeah. I mean I think we did a darn good job. The problem was that every District was doing it on their own. There wasn't any common way of doing things, but what we wanted to do was to take a look at those threats, and one of the first things we did, I guess when we brought on the Reservists, we brought on one Planning Officer in every unit to be the resource that Captain Sullivan could go to. And he could have one point of contact in every unit and say, here's what we need. And that's what we're trying to do is to come up with a prioritized list of vulnerable assets - maybe national assets, maybe they weren't Coast Guard assets - that the Coast Guard might be called upon to protect; for example, a nuclear plant.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: We wouldn't have thought about that before probably.

RADM Casto: That was one of the big things that was going on in the first week or two after September 11th is this review of what assets were out there, and R.G. was running that. I don't remember how long it actually took, but the methodology, I think, was very sound, and they came up with Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 assets. Working with the Captains of the Port all throughout the vast District we came up with 396 Tier 1; meaning high vulnerability, high consequence assets I'll say. But I mean these things were, as the Chief of Staff said, nuclear plants, cruise ships, petro chemical facilities, the Old River Control Structure that most people are unaware of unless you live here. But the Mississippi really doesn't want to flow

through New Orleans anymore. It wants to flow down the Atchafalaya River, and over the years the Corps of Engineers has built massive works to funnel a third of the river, and no more, down the Atchafalaya. Well the Old River Control Structure is extremely vulnerable and I've met with the Corps of Engineers on it and they're very concerned about it. They wanted us, in the immediate wake of September 11th, to provide a 24-hour presence, seven days a week up there for them and we couldn't do that. But I think that structure is very vulnerable to somebody who's got a Timothy McVeigh kind of bomb, could easily turn the river here in New Orleans into a bayou.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: We have other places like . . . I wouldn't want it to get out publicly, but there's a place in West Virginia that is . . .

CAPT Sullivan: We talked about that.

Q: Well when I went to interview Admiral Nacarra, one of the things I wanted to get up to speed on was the LNG situation because there was so much publicity about escorting these LNG tankers. And I talked to a chemical engineer at Headquarters who worked this issue for 30 years and he said, that's not your problem.

RADM Casto: Yeah.

Q: Your problem's out on the Mississippi River and on the Ohio River where the Phosgene plants are.

RADM Casto: Yeah. Well we have had a red flag that we were waving early on, and quite frankly, we had telephone meetings with Admiral Allen on a daily basis, and then I guess it kind of trickled down to a weekly basis. But in almost every one of those meetings I was waving a red flag saying, I know that the pain is in New York. What happened, happened in New York. What happened up there is probably over, but yet you have this armada of ships and Port Security Units all over New York, and I understand once you get them in there it's hard to get them out, because I know Admiral Bennis was trying to get them out, meeting with lots and lots of . . .

Q: Well he had to fend off a whole carrier task group at one point who wanted to steam into New York. So where are we going to put these guys? (Laughter)

CAPT Whitehead: The Navy's saying, 'We're relevant, we're relevant!'

Q: Exactly.

RADM Casto: But the 1st District, I think Boston had a PSU. There was a PSU in New York. There were, I can't tell you how many dozen ships around New York. I thought Norfolk was getting plenty of attention because the Area Commander was in Norfolk and he was being banged on very hard by CINCLANTFLT [Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet] to protect all of his ships that were inport. I think here, especially here, but I think also on the Great Lakes, and I know [the Commander, Coast Guard Ninth District, Rear] Admiral [James D.] Hull will tell you the same thing; there was no attention. And here we were, having inventoried these vulnerabilities. I won't call them threats, but I mean chlorine plants and phosgene plants and worse, our own LNG, which we were concerned about but we were concerned about other things more, and our own cruise ships. Things like the Huey P. Long Bridge, which carries - I don't know what they said - 50 percent of the rail traffic south of somewhere; Saint Louis. And really what kept me awake is the New Orleans to Baton Rouge corridor and then the Galveston to Houston corridor. If you have a chance, get up in an airplane - if we could get you over to Houston and put you in one of the helicopters - and just fly, and you will fly over mile after mile after mile of nothing but petrochemical plants.

Q: Has the linkage been made yet, or has it been made now, in these vulnerabilities and what sources are going to be needed to lock them down if that becomes necessary?

RADM Casto: I think the Commandant . . . you know a lot of this has been policy on the fly, which is understandable.

Q: Sure.

RADM Casto: And I think that we've done extremely well in defining who has what responsibility. Clearly there's an understating that it's a joint responsibility between the owner and the law enforcement agencies and the Coast Guard. The Commandant's been pretty clear that it is . . . he feels that it's first the owner's responsibility to do what they can do. And I think we've made a lot of progress with that and I think that if Captain Rochon were here he could probably outline some of the things that the cruise ship terminals have done in terms of security, and the petrochemical plants have done with respect to security. But he'd also tell you that as far as the petro chemical plants are concerned, their biggest vulnerability is from the river.

Q: Well also too, I think from an American public point of view, probably no matter what chemical plant X's security forces are, in the public's mind its going to be nothing compared to what it means to the public to have a Coast Guard force, let's say, on-scene in an incident. Is that your view as well? Because it's one of the things that came up in New York constantly was that people wanted . . . they didn't want to see, at least after the initial panic had passed, it was more reassuring to have a white hull sitting in the harbor than say a destroyer.

RADM Casto: Yeah, I think that's true.

Q: What does our presence mean to . . . do we need to have a prepositioned idea in mind that the Coast Guard needs to be there and be visible, as well as responding to the situation, but needs to be, in essence, reassuring the public by showing them that we're there?

RADM Casto: That's an interesting point. I think the answer to that is yes. We need to reassure the public. I, frankly, had some problems in that I believe in about the October timeframe we were spending more time reassuring the public than actually being able to do anything meaningful. And so I think there's a balance there. Yes, I think a Coast Guard presence reassures the public, but the public also needs to understand the limitations of what we can do.

Q: One of the things that surprised me in New York was guys in small boats on patrols telling me that, well, you know, yeah, we were out there doing security patrols. We didn't have any guns.

RADM Casto: Well that is a real irritation for me because . . . I can give you a copy of an e-mail that I sent to [the Assistant Commandant for Governmental and Public Affairs, Rear] Admiral [Kevin J.] Eldridge. We were saying things - I think this is the October timeframe - we were saying things like, this is the biggest port security operation since World War II, which may have been true. I'm not sure. I wasn't around during Korea, but it was probably true or at least close to true. The problem is, is that in World War II we had 40,000 people dedicated to Port Security. We don't even have 40,000 people in the Coast Guard today. So I think that was misleading. We specifically said that there were 361 ports where armed Coast Guard patrols were guarding the infrastructure. And I called up and I said, what 361 ports are you talking about? And they said, well all the ports. And I said, you know there's not one weapon north of New Orleans. I said, are you including Pittsburgh and Saint Louis in that 361? Oh yes. They have no weapons. As I sit here and talk to you today, most of them still have no weapons, although we've raised hell about it. I think we stopped saying that we had 361 ports with armed Coast Guard patrols.

We had a situation where an activated Reservist came onboard in Pittsburgh. He happened to be the Chief of Police in Pittsburgh. As the Chief of Police in Pittsburgh he carried a weapon enforcing the law.

We put him in a Coast Guard boat. We put him in a Coast Guard patrol car and had him go around to the chlorine plant up there hoping that if there was a terrorist he could do something about it, but then we denied him the ability to even have self protection by carrying a weapon. And I don't know R.G., do they even have weapons today in Pittsburgh?

CAPT Sullivan: I don't think so.

CAPT Whitehead: No Sir, they don't.

Q: Can you as District Commander order that?

RADM Casto: No. Chief, I've pressed this issue as hard as I could press it.

Q: You're a two-star Admiral. I thought you had, you know, lord of your domain here, Sir? (Laughter)

RADM Casto: Yeah, I know.

CAPT Sullivan: You made some interesting threats.

CAPT Whitehead: I think you got them moving, Sir.

CAPT Sullivan: You got an adult's attention up there.

Q: Well I spent a week with the Atlantic Strike Team and they took me up to Ground Zero and to Fresh Kills, and what not, and at one point one of the boatswain's mates was telling me that they were in their 32-foot aluminum boat going around New York Harbor and the [USCGC] *Tahoma* [WMEC-908] radios them that they need a security patrol right around the *Tahoma* because they don't want any little fishing boats or what not coming near it. And this guy says, I had to open up the window and I'm shouting out trying to get the XO's [Executive Officer's] attention, saying, we don't have any guns. What do you want us to do, you know, say, "please stop?"

RADM Casto: That was extremely frustrating. I actually went out and spent \$513 of my own money to go out and buy an M-9 from a local gun store here to prove that it wasn't hard to get these, and it was exactly the same weapon that our people carry, and I was being told that it was going to take months for the Coast Guard to buy those weapons. I just felt that it was unforgivable to send people out in harm's way hoping to confront a terrorist - if the terrorist were out there - and not have that individual even have the means to protect himself.

Q: Well I think that's one of the fundamental differences between, say a Port Security operation in the Second World War and Port Security now, is that Port Security in the last 30 years has become probably an "M" function. "M" function is regulatory. Regulatory guys haven't carried around guns and it sort of slipped into that mode.

RADM Casto: Well part of the problem was, as I understand it, there was a warrant officer in Atlantic Area who said that "M" people don't carry guns, period, and we're not going to issue any weapons to any MSO because MSOs don't carry guns. And that guy, as far as I understand, stymied any progress until I got [the Assistant Commandant for Operations (G-O), Rear] Admiral [Terry M.] Cross on the phone, Admiral Allen on the phone and [the Director of Operations Capability (G-OC), Rear] Admiral [Harvey] Johnson on the phone, and briefed the Commandant here in October, and that's when the Commandant said, you keep pushing until you get . . .

CAPT Whitehead: Find an adult.

RADM Casto: . . . find an adult.

CAPT Whitehead: In Headquarters. (Laughter)

RADM Casto: But I was going to say, it took at least four to six weeks to even get any movement on it and still I think I'd be safe to say that half the MSOs on the river still don't have weapons.

Q: How does that become a matter of policy if you don't have the authority to do it? As the Commandant says, does it have to come down from Headquarters or the Area? I mean who would be able to authorize that?

RADM Casto: I think that the policy that "M" units can now carry weapons . . . we're probably beyond that. I think we were successful in that, but that was pushing a big rock up a hill.

Q: And now you're stocking weapons lockers and so forth. Is that what you're doing at the MSOs now?

CAPT Whitehead: We've got the weapons now. I think we have all the weapons for all the units that we requested based on the number of boarding teams that they could stand up and how many people they had.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: The issue in some places, and still north in particular, is proper security for them.

Q: Sure.

RADM Casto: Especially when they're in a commercial building.

CAPT Whitehead: Right, and we just had a meeting about a week and a half ago to allocate funds now that the Homeland Security supplemental came out to allocate the money to buy the safes and all those sorts of things. And most places now the weapons are available. They're at the Area Armory or up in Saint Louis Area, or Crane, Indiana I guess it is, and it's just awaiting now the installation of the security for the weapons.

Q: Now how about training weapons qualifications? Has that Homeland Security supplemental figured that into account as well; getting everyone up to speed with the weapons qualifications?

CAPT Sullivan: Yes, it'll help provide some of the equipment necessary for the training. You still have to have gunner's mates qualified; small arms instructors, to put on the training.

Q: Well see, I started out at an MSO in Providence, though many years ago, and that was one of the great things about the Reserves was that you already had somebody at MSO who was a cop, and if they weren't the Range Officer they knew the Ranger Officer, so they could always get us in to get training.

CAPT Sullivan: Right.

RADM Casto: I was pretty pleased and impressed when the first wave of Reserves hit, especially here in New Orleans. We were able to get a majority of them qualified to the range pretty quickly. I think the availability of training rounds was a problem for a while. I don't know if it still is.

CAPT Sullivan: Well the pipeline is much better now.

CAPT Whitehead: The problem now is that we did have these pockets of small arms instructors and they were used right away. They were identified pretty quickly through the system. They were sent down . . . for example, we had a bunch up in Pittsburgh area that were sent down to Houston, Galveston and Port Arthur, and the Captains of the Port down there set up training programs and did a lot of training and qualifications of people, and that was good. But the problem now is that those top level; the top third of the Reserve Group that were so useful now, they're probably going to get pulled into these new billets is my guess.

Q: Sure

CAPT Whitehead: And now we've got to bolster the Reserves up again and it's going to be very difficult to do.

Q: Well the last figure I saw last week was they're talking about 18,000 Reserves now. And for a Service that hasn't been able to get us up to 8,000 for ten years, I don't know how they are going to do it.

CAPT Whitehead: I don't know.

RADM Casto: We kind of think that - maybe simplistically looking at it - you probably have a third of the Reserves that are top-notch, ready to go right now, and then another third that are the next level down, and then another third that are starting from ground zero.

CAPT Whitehead: Right, the ones you're beating up to get their days in.

Q: Yes, Sir.

RADM Casto: And we've been dealing with the top third and have been very pleased with that top third.

Q: Well of course I think the other thing is that bottom third may have been the bottom ten or twenty percent ten years ago. But then when the Reserve units evaporated you had no Training Officer, your support structure went away, and your qual codes vanished.

CAPT Sullivan: Physical exams.

Q: Physical exams, training, *esprit de corps*; all of that stuff went by the boards and they said, well you're sort of a free agent now, augmenting wherever you can find a place to augment, and when that structure went away you lost a lot of the capabilities of the Reserves, especially in Port Security.

RADM Casto: If the active duty units were doing their job they would have incorporated all of that.

CAPT Whitehead: That's the CO's [Commanding Officer's] job.

Q: That was the idea.

CAPT Whitehead: Well that's the point. It's the CO's job, and if the District Commander or the ISC - the MLC organization who now really is kind of managing Reserve personnel through the ISCs - I mean they should be alerting the local COs and hopefully the COs know; you know they're tracking this stuff. But it is their job to do it since we're integrated now. It is their job.

Q: Right. In the months - we've got six or seven months of hindsight now - how do you place this in perspective, not only in your own Coast Guard career, but in the history of the Service? Do you see this

as big an event as [*Exxon*] *Valdez* or as the Mariel Boat Lift? Where do you fit this into the Coast Guard lineage?

RADM Casto: My own sense is that it's every bit as big or if not bigger. I think it's going to have a significant impact on the flavor/color of our Service for years to come.

Q: In what way is that going to happen? Do you see that in terms of a culture shift? We talked about weaponizing MSOs and so forth, but what kinds of culture shifts do you see happening?

RADM Casto: Well certainly that. Certainly getting over, you're an "M" guy. You, don't get a weapon. I think we're beyond that. I think that, as Captain Whitehead pointed out, you're looking at, more than ever, a need for the Groups to operate closely with the Captains of the Ports. I don't know if that will end up with Activities everywhere. I think there are places in this District where I think we should proceed to do Activity concept. I think that there needs to be a look at the Captain of the Port zones versus the Group zones. Here it's much different than in a lot of places because we have so many large ports. And so, for example, in the East Texas area you've got an MSO basically at Galveston, an MSO at Houston, an MSO at Port Arthur, and you have one Group who's trying to support all of their needs. Now I don't know how you realign to marry up Groups and Captain of the Port Authority, but that has to be worked out. Those are probably the hardest places. Other places are easier to fix.

Q: Do you see that happening? Is there an effort underway, or do you see that happening; an effort to sort of match up Group and MSO areas; AORs?

RADM Casto: The one initiative that we have underway is up on the rivers and it's just beginning to try to match up the Captains of the Port and . . .

Q: Well let me ask you the same loaded question I gave to Captain Sullivan. Is this District too big?

RADM Casto: Yes, without a doubt.

CAPT Whitehead: No question.

RADM Casto: Without a doubt.

Q: Was the move to consolidate these two Districts a mistake?

RADM Casto: Yes.

Q: Is it seen as a failure in the Service or is it something that is not at the stage where it's seen as a problem, so that, say it would become two Districts again?

RADM Casto: It's clearly seen as a failure amongst all of our customers north of Baton Rouge.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: I think if you ask most people in this District who have to deal with the challenges, they will tell you that it's been a failure. I think that people outside this District don't have the conviction that it was a failure, and since there's nothing reasonably that anybody can do about it, it's like live with it. But we're just in the process. Joel and I have been here for a year and we've come to the conclusion - it didn't take too long to get an idea of what we had - but now after a year we have confidence that the right decision would be to reconstitute some kind of Command and Control in Saint Louis, and that's what we're looking at doing with . . . just some ideas of putting a District back there, which would be a lot of people, a lot of investment, probably not doable. Making Saint Louis a sector, or some other name, under this District so

that you could keep . . . you wouldn't have to reinvent/reconstitute all the District infrastructure in Saint Louis, but you would get a flag officer in Saint Louis that's focused on issues that our customers up there; unique issues that they have.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: It would cut down on the horrendous travel to get to places from here. It was bad to get to Keokuk, Iowa before September 11th. It used to take eight hours to get to Keokuk, Iowa. I don't know if you can get to Keokuk, Iowa in a day now.

Q: Have you ever been to North Dakota?

RADM Casto: Not yet.

Q: Again, it's more than a facetious question, because I think somebody reading this report is going to be surprised that the Admiral in New Orleans has operational control over the Canadian border in North Dakota.

RADM Casto: Well some people will say, hey, nothing ever happens in North Dakota. I get letters from the Governor in North Dakota saying, how come you're not doing a good job in maintaining the aids to navigation up here on the river.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: Anyway, where were we before we launched into that?

Q: Was this idea of sectors in your minds after 9/11? Did you prioritize? Well you had these three tiers, but did you also have geographic areas that you set up specifically to deal with different threats, or did you more or less rely on your Group areas, or how did you set that up?

RADM Casto: I don't know if I follow exactly. The 396 Tier 1 assets were spread all over this area. Maybe North Dakota didn't have any, I'm not sure. But they're spread through most of the 26 states. And so we had concerns in every Captain of the Port zone, but we clearly focused on three areas as the most likely where an attack would come and where that attack would have the most dire consequences, and that was the Galveston/Houston corridor, New Orleans to Baton Rouge corridor, and Port Arthur.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: And Port Arthur was added mostly because of the LNG facility and the fact that it's a critical outload port.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: To get to your question a little bit as well though, I guess you were asking how did we . . . ?

Q: Conceptualize your battle space.

CAPT Whitehead: How do we, geographically, yeah. One of the things we did at the very beginning, and which I think has been bought throughout the entire Coast Guard now - and I don't mean that we started it here and it fell out, but it's a logical thing to have occurred - is that if you look at the Marine Safety Offices and the Group Offices, the Groups, you know, that's not their business to manage the Marine Safety

facilities and to know what's out there. The "M" side of the house really knew a lot more of what were the threats. That was logical. They also had the statutory and regulatory authority to be able to manage those facilities in some ways.

Q: But in this situation you have the "M" people that are, actually.

CAPT Whitehead: Well, what we were looking at was infrastructure really.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: You know, trying to protect infrastructure and the shipping coming in and out to make sure that the ships coming in and out aren't weapons; that sort of thing. Now I mean, clearly, you can't do it with the "M" side and with just the Groups. They've got to work together. And one of the things that we told them at the very beginning was for the areas that we're setting up which were, I would say, predominately the Captain of the Port zones, but for those areas the Captain of the Port is the director of that; of the operations in there.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: And the Group commander cannot do the job without them, but they're resource providers, and when the Captain of the Port comes out and says, I need to protect these 15 places, the Group Commander rightly has to come back and say, I don't have the resources to protect 15. Tell me your top four or five and I'll do those.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: You know, just kind of what we do if there is an oil spill. The Marine Safety Office probably goes out to the Group and says, I need a safety zone out here, 24 by 7, whatever, and the Group Commander is the Resource Provider and says, here's what I can do to help you and they work together. But we clearly made the Captain of the Port the greater of the equals and that caused a little bit of heartburn, but somebody had to be in charge.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: You've got to have somebody in charge and the Captain of the Port clearly has the regulatory and legal authority to make things happen, that the Group commander didn't have.

Q: Is that something that you would see as a . . . is that a situation that would pertain if you went to an Activities' concept; that you'd have sort of a first among equals?

RADM Casto: Well you know we've done Activities in a few places like New York and I think it's worked out well in New York. I talked to Dick Bennis. He said that what happened in the wake of 9/11 would have been an impossible task if they hadn't had an Activity in New York.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: I don't know that Activities would work everywhere. You're getting into issues like, who's going to be the CO? Does that mean that every . . . that the Group commander's Ops Ashore Specialty goes away entirely and gets incorporated into the "M" program? Those are kinds of issues that get to be pretty dicey.

Q: Sure.

RADM Casto: The elimination of command billets is another negative that goes along with that, but those are issues that are going to be sorted out at Headquarters.

Q: Right.

RADM Casto: And they're difficult ones for them. You know you're talking about culture and culture changes, which the Chief of Staff was mentioning, reminded me of something I think that's important to bring up here. Last summer this District was fighting off an initiative coming out of Headquarters to eliminate all boats at MSOs, and I could understand where they're coming from if you look at a more typical MSO with a Group that's located right near by.

Q: Sure.

RADM Casto: And they were also pressing to eliminate all boatswain's mates from all the MSOs. And the reason we were fighting it off wasn't entirely because of the rivers, but largely driven by the rivers. There are virtually no boats operated on the rivers other than by the Marine Safety Offices. Of course the Groups up there have boats. They have basically buoy tenders; river tenders, and those river tenders have a couple of little punts on them; work punts. But as far as a putting a boat out there that could do a security patrol, the only people who have those boats on the rivers are the MSOs.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: I think that, and I hope, in the wake of September 11th, we no longer have to fight off the idea that the MSOs have to get rid of all their boats and boatswain's mates.

Q: Is there a need for a new type of river patrol boat?

RADM Casto: Yes, and I understand that's being looked at and incorporated in the . . . what do they call it, the something or other?

CAPT Whitehead: Well I'm not sure where that stands actually. I know that Headquarters has a plan to purchase these new response boats and the response boats "As" and "Bs" are large and smalls. But I don't think they've looked at those boats to say, are they the type of craft that would operate well in the river system?

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: I would certainly make the argument that, yes, we need to probably look at reorganizing our river operations a little bit to make sure we've got our Headquarters for our Coast Guard activities in the right places; both politically and operationally. But to get the boats out there - the ones that'll work well - there's a real benefit to it as well, is that you train people to operate on the river systems, whether they're "O" or "M", or Activities, or Coast Guard operations, whatever you call it, those folks could then become, later on, a core of people with training in riverine operations.

Q: Sure.

CAPT Whitehead: I mean you know it's not just for . . .

Q: Well it's a unique environment certainly. You would think that you would need some unique technology, especially now with a . . . like I said, a river port must be a whole different ball game than a gulf port or an ocean port.

CAPT Whitehead: It's linear.

CAPT Sullivan: It's a sausage.

RADM Casto: Its a thousand miles long and a hundred yards wide.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: This model port concept falls on its face in most of our District.

Q: Exactly. The diagram looks real nice in Nantucket, but . . .

CAPT Sullivan: Even the big ports like New Orleans. I mean its 233 miles long.

RADM Casto: I had some notes here to talk about the evolution of the MARSEC 1, the MARSEC 2, the MARSEC 3 and the guidance. I don't mean to be critical. I mean we were doing policy on the fly. Everyone was working hard and I think that what was done was just marvelous in the end. But we were getting a different definition of MARSEC 1 every week or every couple of weeks, and the people in the Area were trying to, I guess, gel their thoughts around something where they could put out a consistent policy. And so they came up with a model port. And again, in these conferences we would typically raise our hand and say, that's nice but it doesn't work here, because instead of a 12-mile run from the sea buoy you have a 100-mile run. But I mean under MARSEC 1 we were told, at some point, that we were going to have to escort every high interest vessel in from the sea buoy to the dock.

Q: Right.

RADM Casto: And for a high interest vessel going into Baton Rouge, which is pretty typical around here, it's a 233-mile run.

Q: That's one way?

RADM Casto: One-way.

CAPT Sullivan: That's right.

CAPT Whitehead: Its three shifts of Sea Marshals.

Q: Right.

CAPT Sullivan: And it's not a straight shot. It's the Snake River.

RADM Casto: That wasn't envisioned because the Sea Marshal concept was developed for, I guess, San Francisco and San Diego, and they have relatively short runs and it worked very well out there. It doesn't work so well here. I think at one point we were supposed to escort every high interest vessel, and again, to New Orleans it's a 100 plus miles, to Baton Rouge it's 200 and some miles. And even in Galveston it's 53 miles, and in Corpus it 40 something miles, and in the Port Arthur area, I mean you have to do the boardings 20 miles offshore because the Gulf is so shallow near the shore. So I think even in Port Arthur Sabine; Beaumont, you're looking at 30 or 40 miles.

Q: What kind of responses were you getting when you pointed these things out to the Area or to Headquarters?

RADM Casto: I think . . . well first of all it was making their life difficult because they had a hard enough job trying to put out policy that was going to apply to everybody. It was impossible. I think every time we

raised the issued . . . I tell you every time I raised the issue I thought that the issue was given credence and acted upon appropriately by the Area. But then we would all go back to our benches and, you know, it would come back again and it would come back again. Again, I think without the understanding of how different things were here. We asked to have some the area planners come down so that they could see it and that eventually happened. I don't remember what timeframe that was. That helped a lot. And then Admiral Allen came down and met with the people in Port Arthur and Houston, and that helped a lot as well.

Q: Yes.

RADM Casto: And I think that what we have now is we have policy that gives us . . . almost is based on what your resource availability is to do this, and I think that's the right thing for now. The only problem is, is that we have set up a different level of security, for say San Francisco where we're still doing 100 percent Sea Marshals, then in New Orleans, which is doing very few. And it's because of the amount of resources. It's all based on how many resources you have.

Q: And a logistical problem of getting people from all of these different places.

RADM Casto: Right.

Q: But it also sets up a dichotomous public perception that San Francisco is being guarded and New Orleans is not.

RADM Casto: Well that was my concern from the beginning as far as New York was concerned and Boston was concerned. Because I was getting hit upon by our customers, I guess, here; the marine industry in particular, saying, look what you guys are doing in Boston. How come you're not doing that in Port Arthur?

Q: Right. Is there anything else that you wanted to add Admiral that we haven't covered?

RADM Casto: There's another significant issue here that has been dealt with Coast Guard wide, and that is, what have you stopped doing and can you continue to stop doing those things. You know the Commandant gets beaten up by Senator [John] Kerry who's really interested in fisheries law enforcement, and I guess on the Alaska delegation for the same thing. Frankly, we haven't gotten that kind of beaten up here because usually we're getting beaten up by Congressman [H. L.] Callahan who thinks that we do too much fisheries enforcement. But we have virtually stopped doing fisheries law enforcement, except if an 87-footer's going from Mobile to New Orleans to do Homeland Security patrols they may do some fisheries enroute, but we have cut back almost all of the fisheries law enforcement except on the border between Mexico and the U.S. And so our Fisheries LE [Law Enforcement] programs mostly are Drug LE programs. I won't say it's nonexistent, but it's a shadow of what it used to be. I'm not getting any pressure from anyone down here to do more.

Q: Let me ask you this. Are you starting to conceptualize those sorts of things, whether it's drugs or LE, as border security problems so that they all sort of inter-finger with this general security environment?

RADM Casto: You know I've been involved in those kinds of discussions and I really think that those things are a portion of our security, at least our economic security, especially in places like off of New England. But down here, even if they are involved in the equation, they're the lower priority of the equation for right now.

Q: Yes.

CAPT Whitehead: Of interest though when you look at it, one of the things that the Admiral did real soon after this whole thing began, you know, we realized there was no way we were going to be able to do this Homeland Security mission and do the other missions at the same time.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: And I don't know whether the other Districts did it quite as obvious as we did. But we clearly told the folks that this is the pecking order; the priorities for missions for you to do, and Fisheries LE fell off and Drug LE fell off. But of interest . . . I mean since we've got more boats out, more patrols going on, we've got 270s and PC-170s out, our drug numbers are up. I mean the difficulty is, we haven't gone out and said, do Drug LE, but we're doing more Homeland Security and more patrols, and our drug numbers are up; significantly up.

Q: Right.

CAPT Whitehead: But the difficulty, politically is going to be, there are people in Headquarters who measure, by programs, and if you can't call it Fish LE or Drug LE, well that's not a success because that's not my program.

Q: Well that's one of the things that I did when I got to Headquarters was try to get exactly that; some of those numbers. And there's the surge in cutter hours from September 10th through the 13th and there was a drop off in missions, but really not as much as I thought there would be. The other missions dropped off some, but you've got this huge spike in Port Security and Defense Readiness and so forth, and really not a big drop off in other things.

CAPT Whitehead: Well that's only three days though, right?

Q: But over time though . . .

CAPT Whitehead: Yeah.

Q: There's the graph over the first four months and the spike in cutter hours comes pretty much back to normal within about three weeks, whereas the Boat Force really took it on the chin and has just been running crazy for four months now.

RADM Casto: That's exactly right. We found that we were having some of our boats running 300 percent over programmed hours and when we sought funding for that the answer was, there is no funding for that. Get back down to program hours.

Q: Right.

RADM Casto: And that's when I felt - that was about in the early November time-frame - and then I could see where we were going by that point. And where we were going was that we weren't going to get anymore resources and we were being told to operate within the budget. I, or as the Chief of Staff said, we didn't want our people at the pointy end of the spear to be out there worrying about, geez, I'm not doing my Drug LE or I'm not doing my Fisheries LE., I'm not doing this. So we put out in early November, the 8th District Commander's Intent. This is probably a month before the Area and Headquarters did it, and we kind of unleashed them from having to do things because they were being told to do way more than they could possibly do. So we wanted to give them clear, unambiguous guidance as to what our expectations were.

The other thing that we did is, I think, paid dividends. We, throughout the summer, had a COs' Conference planned for whatever week it was; the 20th?

CAPT Whitehead: The third week of September, wasn't it?

CAPT Sullivan: The third week.

CAPT Whitehead: The very end of September it was planned.

RADM Casto: And when September 11th happened we talked and I think our first inclination was to cancel it, and then the more we talked we said, you know we came to the conclusion, which we followed up on, is, we didn't cancel it. We shortened it and we made it singularly focused on Homeland Security. And that was just almost priceless because at that point we had the COs of the MSOs and the Groups and the Air Stations all in here together, and we said, okay, our world has been turned upside down. What are we going to do? And it was your idea to break them up into sectors and we had the Air Station CO, the MSO COs and the Group CO for particular areas dealing with issues in their particular domain like Texas, in the central gulf coast, and in the rivers. And that gelled a lot of the issues in our minds and made it so that we in the District; one: understood what their challenges were, and two: could champion those issues, and when we failed to get the resources, to unshackle them from having to do the impossible.

Q: 9/11, in other words, led to, do you think, to a much greater integration between all these tiers of the Coast Guard?

RADM Casto: As far as it deals with Homeland Security I would say yes, definitely. But I think there's still some undone work in those areas.

Q: Unfinished business.

RADM Casto: Unfinished business, yes.

Q: Well Admiral, I want to thank you for your time, Sir.

RADM Casto: Oh, you're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

